

**MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST  
DETERMINATION OF ELIGIBILITY FORM**

NR Eligible: yes ☐  
no ☐

Property Name: Farmstead on Cowenton Avenue Inventory Number: BA-3134  
Address: Cowenton Avenue Historic district: ☐ yes ☒ no  
City: Perry Hall Zip Code: 21128 County: Baltimore County  
USGS Quadrangle(s): White Marsh  
Property Owner: \_\_\_\_\_ Tax Account ID Number: \_\_\_\_\_  
Tax Map Parcel Number(s): \_\_\_\_\_ Tax Map Number: 72  
Project: Section 100: I-95, I-895(N) Split to North of MD 43 Agency: Maryland Transportation Authority  
Agency Prepared By: A.D. Marble & Company  
Preparer's Name: Stephanie Foell Date Prepared: 12/1/2003  
Documentation is presented in: See Key References List  
Preparer's Eligibility Recommendation: \_\_\_\_\_ Eligibility recommended ☒ Eligibility not recommended  
Criteria: ☐ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D Considerations: ☐ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D ☐ E ☐ F ☐ G  
*Complete if the property is a contributing or non-contributing resource to a NR district/property:*  
Name of the District/Property: \_\_\_\_\_  
Inventory Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Eligible: ☐ yes ☐ no Listed: ☐ yes ☐ no  
Site visit by MHT Staff ☐ yes ☒ no Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Description of Property and Justification: *(Please attach map and photo)*

**Architectural Description**

The small farmstead on Cowenton Avenue on the northeast corner of the I-95 overpass retains several elements found on small-scale agricultural operations in northeastern Baltimore County. The property, which has no street address in tax records, is dominated by the farmhouse. The two-story residence has a steeply pitched, cross-gable roof, and is clad in aluminum siding. The symmetrical main (southwest) façade features a centrally placed replacement door flanked by a single, one-over-one, replacement window with shutters on each side. Identically configured windows occur throughout the house. A full-width, single-story, shed-roof porch is supported by simple rectangular members and the balustrade is composed of similarly plain elements. A small, single-pane, triangular-arch window is located in the apex of the gable.

The southeast elevation features centrally placed windows, and a vent is located in the apexes of the gable. A storm cellar with double doors opens into the ground. A single-story ell extends from the rear (northeast) elevation of the building and forms a T-shaped building footprint. The main cross-gable roof and porch roof are covered with asphalt shingles, and an exterior brick chimney is located on the west elevation. The northeast elevation is not visible from the street.

**MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST REVIEW**

Eligibility recommended ☐ Eligibility not recommended ☒  
Criteria: ☐ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D Considerations: ☐ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D ☐ E ☐ F ☐ G

**MHT Comments:**

Jim Donluomo  
Reviewer, Office of Preservation Services

Bluntz  
Reviewer, National Register Program

6/14/04  
Date

6/15/04  
Date

200401247

BA-3134

Farmstead on Cowenton Avenue

Page 2

Three outbuildings can be viewed from the street. A two-story rectangular building that has been clad in siding and has replacement windows is located directly to the northeast of the residence. Its gable roof is covered with asphalt shingles. Its original or present use is not evident, but it does not appear to have an obvious agricultural function.

A barn is located to the east of the house. It is constructed of vertical wood boards and has a metal gable roof, and it appears to be consistent with barns constructed in the 1930s. Only the roof of another outbuilding is visible beyond the barn.

Interstate 95 runs directly to the west of the site. Mature hardwoods and evergreen shrubs are found throughout the property and appear to date to the period of construction of the residence (circa 1885) and ornamental foundation plantings occur at the front and rear of the building.

#### History/Significance

##### General Regional History

The area surrounding Cowenton Avenue is part of Perry Hall in northeastern Baltimore County. The area derives its name from Harry Dorsey Gough's nearby estate of the same name. Cowenton Avenue is located just off of Philadelphia Road, which followed the path of an early Native American trail (Brooks and Rockel 1979:134).

The Susquehannock Indians were the most prominent tribe to inhabit this area of Baltimore County. Captain John Smith encountered the tribe during his 1608 expedition, which was the first European exploration of the Gunpowder River Valley. Twenty six years later, in 1634, the first settlers of Maryland arrived in St. Mary's County.

In 1659, the colonial legislature established Baltimore County, a huge expanse of land that included parts of present-day Cecil, Harford, Carroll, Howard, and Kent Counties. However, despite abundant natural resources which included vast stands of timber and rich outcroppings of iron ore, the area did not have enough fertile, flat, cleared land ready for colonists to farm.

Little is known about the earliest European settlers of northeastern Baltimore County. Allegedly, James Denton was one of the first to explore the area after Smith. In 1665, he discovered saltpeter, an ingredient of gunpowder, along the banks of the river, which is how the Gunpowder River acquired its name, and is one of the oldest place names in Maryland (Marks 2000:7).

##### Philadelphia Road

The area of Baltimore County that is now Perry Hall developed largely as a result of its proximity to Philadelphia Road/Maryland Route 7. In 1729, the City of Baltimore was platted as a future port and commerce center. During that time, surveyors laid out the Philadelphia Road, linking Philadelphia, the New World's largest port city, with points south and west, including Baltimore.

The roadway's importance grew over time as interstate commerce became more prevalent. By the 1740s, commercial thoroughfares were being constructed to move farm produce, mill products, lime, and iron castings to the port city of Baltimore, and taverns and hotels sprang up along the Philadelphia Road. After several attempts to establish a turnpike, the Baltimore and Havre de Grace Turnpike Company received a charter to construct a toll road on the bed of the Philadelphia Road in 1814. The turnpike company initially enjoyed a period of prosperity. However, after only 20 years, railroads began offering intense competition for the Philadelphia turnpike (Hollifield 1978:81-82).

As Baltimore continued its expansion eastward, portions of the turnpike were ceded to the city. In 1888, Harford County assumed control of the turnpike contained within its boundaries. The end of the turnpike came in 1894, when Baltimore County assumed

#### MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST REVIEW

Eligibility recommended \_\_\_\_\_

Eligibility not recommended \_\_\_\_\_

Criteria: \_\_\_ A \_\_\_ B \_\_\_ C \_\_\_ D Considerations: \_\_\_ A \_\_\_ B \_\_\_ C \_\_\_ D \_\_\_ E \_\_\_ F \_\_\_ G

MHT Comments:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Reviewer, Office of Preservation Services\_\_\_\_\_  
Date\_\_\_\_\_  
Reviewer, National Register Program\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

BA-3134

Farmstead on Cowenton Avenue

Page 3

control of the remaining roadway within its jurisdiction.

During the twentieth century, traffic continued to increase on Philadelphia Road, particularly when automobiles became prevalent. Businesses arose along the former turnpike to serve the traveling public and many thought the road would continue to be the favored route for those traveling between Philadelphia and points south. However, in the late 1930s, the state held discussions regarding Works Progress Administration funds available for highway construction. A decision was made either to improve the existing Philadelphia Road, by then designated as Maryland Route 7, or construct a new roadway parallel to the old one. The businesses along the existing route fought to retain their source of business, but constructing a new, parallel road became the final decision, and work commenced on the new road, the Pulaski Highway, which eventually replaced Philadelphia Road as the primary thoroughfare through the area.

#### Agricultural and Industrial Development in Northeastern Baltimore County

Settlement of northeastern Baltimore County likely began circa 1660. Part of Perry Hall was surveyed as early as 1669. Because of the costly and complex land grant process, many wealthy landowners purchased parcels of land in Baltimore County, viewing these holdings as either investments in the future or potential bequests for heirs. Even land that had been purchased remained vacant (Marks 2000:7).

Consequently, during the early eighteenth century, land patterns consisted of small settlements, trails, and wilderness. Small-scale farmers, woodcutters, and miners were the prevalent residents, not the structured society of the southern Maryland gentry. This trend continues into later centuries as farmers continue to cultivate smaller plots of land than their Southern, plantation-owning counterparts (Marks 2000:11).

The Nottingham Company operated several iron furnaces in this area of Baltimore County, and collectively the business was referred to as the Nottingham Iron Works. Established in 1745 by Alexander Lawson, the company was named after investor James Russell's estate in Prince George's County, Maryland. Although the Nottingham Iron Works enjoyed several decades of prosperity, its holdings were seized after the Revolutionary War because of Lawson's strong ties to Great Britain. At this time, the company was subdivided among multiple landowners, although the Nottingham Forge remained productive until the late nineteenth century. The furnace, however, ceased production, although the actual date of cessation is somewhat in dispute as is the exact location of the ruins. Some early residents of Baltimore County may have been lured to the area because the iron works promised employment (Marks 2000:20-22).

By the mid-nineteenth century, many landowning residents of northeastern Baltimore County were German, Polish, or Irish immigrants. Other residents were tenant farmers who occupied land held by the descendants of the original landholders. Generally, farms were small in size and produced relatively minor amounts of what were known as stoop crops, vegetables which required bending over to harvest. These included carrots, parsnips, beans, etc. These crops were either sold at markets throughout Baltimore City (usually the Belair Market, the closest to the area) or sold by the farmers themselves, a practice known as truck farming which was prevalent throughout the area. Also at this time, as greenhouses came into widespread use, this area of Baltimore County became an important center for the production of year-round cut flowers for weddings, funerals, and bouquets (McGrain 1990:17).

Residences such the Cowenton Avenue farmhouse, simple I-house forms with cross-gable roofs and minimal architectural ornamentation, were commonly constructed as the farmhouses or tenant farmer residences for many small-scale farms throughout Maryland.

#### The I-House

#### MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST REVIEW

Eligibility recommended \_\_\_\_\_

Eligibility not recommended \_\_\_\_\_

Criteria:    A    B    C    D    Considerations:    A    B    C    D    E    F    G

MHT Comments:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Reviewer, Office of Preservation Services\_\_\_\_\_  
Date\_\_\_\_\_  
Reviewer, National Register Program\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

BA-3134

Farmstead on Cowenton Avenue

Page 4

The Cowenton Avenue farmhouse is essentially an extended I-house form. I-houses, which are two stories in height and one room deep, descend from traditional British folk forms and are common in the United States, most notably in the Tidewater South, prior to circa 1890. However, the popularity of the form continued into the twentieth century, and examples are found throughout the eastern half of the country. Varying patterns of porches, chimneys, and rear extensions are commonly seen in examples dating after circa 1890 (McAlester and McAlester 1984:96).

The I-houses in northeastern Baltimore County range from modest folk dwellings, which were often constructed as either farmhouses or tenant farmer houses on small-scale farms, to more elaborate examples that were the residences of locally prominent citizens.

#### Determination of Eligibility

The residence of the Cowenton Avenue Farmstead was constructed circa 1885. Its steeply pitched, cross-gable roof form is commonly seen throughout Maryland, and appears frequently within northeastern Baltimore County.

*The quality of significance in American history, architecture, archeology, engineering, and culture is present in districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects that possess integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association, and:*

- A. that are associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history; or
- B. that are associated with the lives of significant persons in our past; or
- C. that embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction; or
- D. that have yielded or may be likely to yield, information important in history or prehistory.

The Cowenton Avenue Farmstead is not eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. Research has not yielded any indication that it is significant under Criterion A as a place that is associated with events that made a significant contribution to the patterns of the nation's history. The property does not appear to be associated with any significant people and is not eligible under Criterion B.

Under National Register Criterion C, the Cowenton Avenue Farmstead is not eligible as an agricultural resource which embodies distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction. Although small-scale farming was an important part of the agricultural history of northeastern Baltimore County, there are numerous small farmsteads in the region which retain higher degrees of architectural and site integrity than the Cowenton Avenue Farm. The original agricultural setting of the farmstead has been greatly compromised by the construction of Interstate 95, which runs along the western edge of the property. The residential and agricultural buildings have all been altered to some degree and collectively convey a somewhat compromised image of agricultural life during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

This property was evaluated under Criterion D. An archeological survey was conducted and cultural materials were recovered. These materials were historic, dating principally to the early twentieth century. Based on the findings, the site (18BA514) is not eligible for the National Register and no additional testing is recommended. See the accompanying archeology report for this project (Section 100: I-95, I-895 (N) Split to North of MD 43; Phase I Archeological Survey, Baltimore City and Baltimore County, Maryland) for more information.

#### Key References

#### MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST REVIEW

Eligibility recommended \_\_\_\_\_

Eligibility not recommended \_\_\_\_\_

Criteria:    \_\_\_ A    \_\_\_ B    \_\_\_ C    \_\_\_ D    Considerations:    \_\_\_ A    \_\_\_ B    \_\_\_ C    \_\_\_ D    \_\_\_ E    \_\_\_ F    \_\_\_ G

MHT Comments:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Reviewer, Office of Preservation Services\_\_\_\_\_  
Date\_\_\_\_\_  
Reviewer, National Register Program\_\_\_\_\_  
Date



BA-3134

Farmstead on Cowenton Avenue

Page 5

Bromley, George W. and Walter A.

1915 Atlas of Baltimore County Maryland. G.W. Bromley &amp; Company. Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

Brooks, Neal A. and Eric G. Rockel

1979 A History of Baltimore County. Friends of the Towson Library, Incorporated, Towson, Maryland.

Hollifield, William

1978 Difficulties Made Easy: History of the Turnpikes of Baltimore City and County. Baltimore County Historical Society, Cockeysville, Maryland.

Hopkins, Griffith Morgan

1877 Atlas of Baltimore County. G.M. Hopkins, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

Marks, David

2000 The History of Perry Hall, Maryland. Gateway Press, Inc., Baltimore, Maryland.

McAlester, Virginia and Lee McAlester

1984 A Field Guide to American Houses. Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., New York, New York.

McGrain, John W.

1990 An Agricultural History of Baltimore County, Maryland. N.p.

Maryland Department of Transportation/State Highway Administration n.d.

Suburbanization Historic Context and Survey Methodology. Available at

<http://www.marylandroads.com/keepingcurrent/maintainRoadsBridges/bridges/oppe/suburbs/suburban0.asp>

National Park Service

2002 Historic Residential Suburbs; Guidelines for Evaluation and Documentation for the National Register of Historic Places. National Register Bulletin.

Scharf, J. Thomas

1881 History of Baltimore City and County. Lewis Everts Company, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

Sidney, James C.

1850 Map of the City and County of Baltimore, Maryland. James M. Stephens, Baltimore, Maryland.

Taylor, Robert

1857 Map of the city and county of Baltimore, Maryland.

USGS

1890-1969 Quadrangle Maps for Baltimore East, Gunpowder, Middle River, and White Marsh. USGS 15 Minute Series. United States Department of the Interior.

**MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST REVIEW**

Eligibility recommended \_\_\_\_\_

Eligibility not recommended \_\_\_\_\_

Criteria: \_\_\_ A \_\_\_ B \_\_\_ C \_\_\_ D Considerations: \_\_\_ A \_\_\_ B \_\_\_ C \_\_\_ D \_\_\_ E \_\_\_ F \_\_\_ G

MHT Comments:

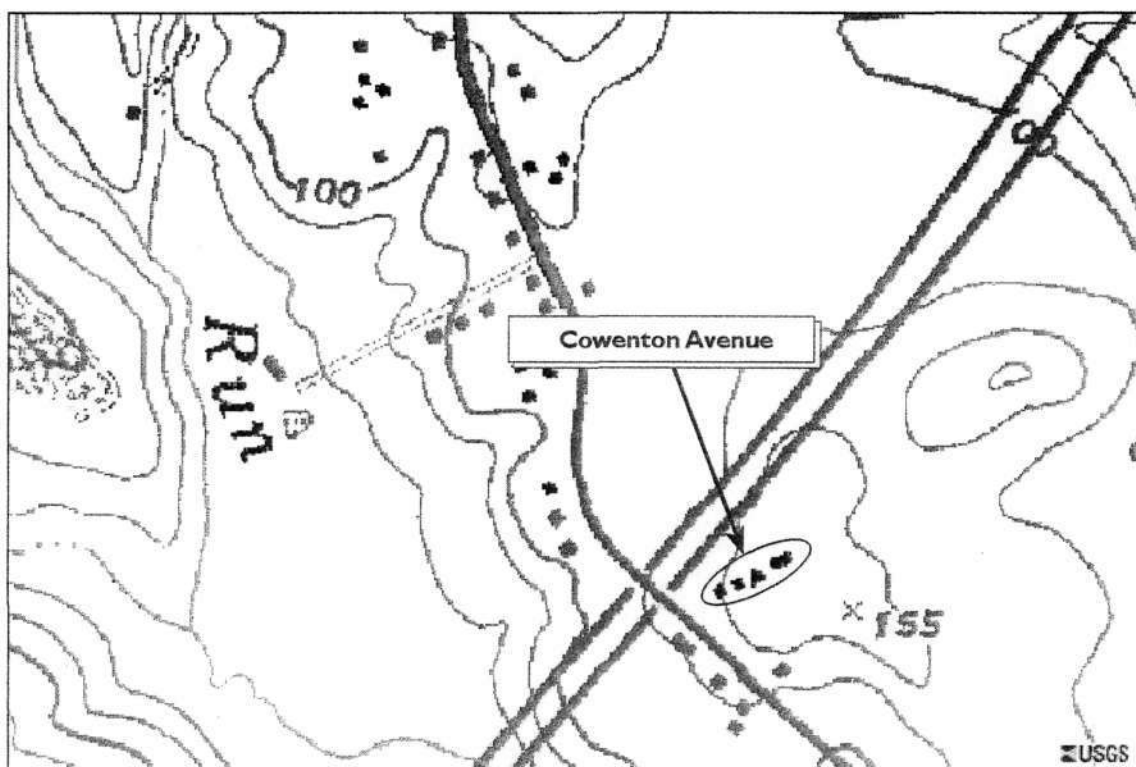
\_\_\_\_\_  
Reviewer, Office of Preservation Services\_\_\_\_\_  
Date\_\_\_\_\_  
Reviewer, National Register Program\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

BA - 3134

**Resource Location Map**

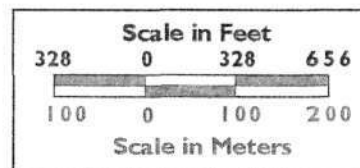
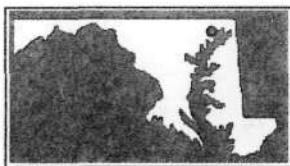
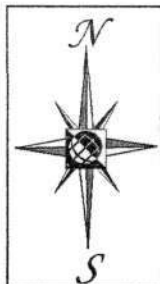
**Section 100: I-95, I-895 (N) Split to North of MD 43**

Baltimore County, Maryland



Map Source: USGS Topographic Quadrangle; White Marsh, MD

A-700C





BA-3134

Conventon Ave. Farmstead, east side of Conventon Ave.,  
Baltimore County, MD South of I-95

S. Foell

10/2003

MD SHPO

Farmhouse: Front facade, view to the NE

1/2

ART-2611 <No. 1497815  
888 7817 N N N N N N N N N N





BA-3134

Cowenton Ave. Farmstead, east side of Cowenton Ave, South of  
Baltimore County, MD

I-95

S. Foell

10/2003

MD SHPO

Front facade and side of  
barn - view to the NE

2/2

ART-2611 <No. 12A>013  
888 7812 N N N-4 04 <042>0